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PRRC emerging trends

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Highly Religious Group Are Most Likely To Feel Close To Families

PRINCETON, N.J. — Americans who say religion is the most important influence in their lives, and those who receive a great deal of comfort from their beliefs, are far more likely than their counterparts to feel close to their families, to find their jobs fulfilling, and to be excited about the future.

Those who agreed strongly with the statements, "You receive comfort and support from your religious beliefs," and "Your religious faith is the most important influence in your life," were also more likely to strongly agree with a series of statements about happiness and personal optimism than the overall survey group. But when "agreed" and "agreed strongly" responses were combined, the answers of the overall group and the subgroup of those who agreed that religion was important in their lives showed no significant differences.

This pattern emerges from a recent Gallup Poll in which responses by levels of religious enthusiasm were cross-matched. Those who are the most enthusiastic about religion are also more likely than others to feel financially secure, to be happy, and less likely to get depressed, and less likely to have a lot of stress in their lives.

The survey asked respondents whether they agreed strongly, agreed, disagreed, or disagreed strongly with a series of statements.

Overall, 31 percent of Americans agreed strongly that they receive comfort and support from their religious beliefs; 51 perent said they agreed, 12 percent said they disagreed and 4 percent said they disagreed strongly. (Figures do not add up to 100 percent because the "no opinions" responses were dropped.)

Twenty-two percent of Americans agreed strongly that their faith was the most important influence in their lives; 38 percent said they agreed, 31 percent said they disagreed, and 6 percent said they disagreed strongly.

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Bezilla To Edit Emerging Trends

Beginning with the September 1989 issue, Robert Bezilla will be the editor of **Emerging Trends**, working closely with George Gallup, Jr., Executive Director of the Princeton Religion Research Center. Bezilla has conducted many of Gallup's and the Princeton Religion Research Center's most important studies on religion and related topics.

In addition to his duties at PRRC, Mr. Bezilla is Director of the Gallup Youth Survey, and most recently edited the book, "America's Youth: 1977-1988." He is also vice president of Multi-Sponsor Surveys, a firm which conducts syndicated research under an agreement with The Gallup Organization.

Bezilla has been a survey researcher for 25 years, and before joining the Gallup constellation of organizations was president of Benson & Benson, Inc. He has published over 50 scholarly papers on public opinion research, marketing research, and information science.

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The following chart compares responses from the three groups with the "no opnion" category excluded:

Religious Enthusiasm and Mood, Lifestyles of Americans

	Total	Agree strongly religious beliefs are comforting	Agree strongly religion is most important
	%	%	%
'You feel very close to your family.'			
Agree strongly	53	86	80
Agree	42	12	14
Disagree	4	1	3
Disagree strongly	1	1	1
'You are financially secure.'			
Agree strongly	16	33	29
Agree	54	43	42
Disagree	22	15	20
Disagree strongly	6	8	7
'You are generally a happy person'			
Agree strongly	36	69	61
Agree	61	30	35
Disagee	2	1	2
Disagree strongly	1	1	2
"Your occupation is exciting and fulfilling."			
Agree strongly	21	36	31
Agree	46	29	34
Disagree	14	11	10
Disagree strongly	4	6	4
'You Often Get Depressed'			
Agree strongly	4	7	6
Agree	19	13	17
Disagree	50	33	37
Disagree strongly	26	46	40
'You have a lot of stress in your life'			
Agree strongly	12	18	19*
Agree	35	26	28
Disagree	42	32	33
Disagree strongly	11	23	21
'You are excited about your future.'			
Agree strongly	25	45	39
Agree	52	35	40
Disagree	17	11	14
Disagree strongly	3	6	5

Figures are based on 1,017 interviews conducted in March, 1989. For findings based on samples of this size, one can say with 95 percent confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects could be four percentage points in either direction.

*Table adds to more than 100% due to multiple responses.

Study Refutes Industry Assumptions On Press Coverage Of Religion

(RSN) — A groundbreaking study on religion reporting and readershp in the public press, an area largely ignored in news industry surveys, refutes many of the assumptions that have long underpinned the widespread view among newspaper executives that religion is a marginal beat, worthy of few resources and little space.

The first results of the ongoing project were released in a joint presentation April 21 by Judy Weidman, editor/director of Religious News Service, and Stewart Hoover of Temple University during the 60th annual meeting of the Religious Public Relations Council. The study was made possible by a $100,000 grant to Religious News Service by the Lilly Endowment. Dr. Hoover, of Temple's School of Communications and Theater, was the principal researcher.

In addition to two national Gallup surveys, the study consists of interviews with religion writers and editors at eight newspapers, with members of six church congregations in the Philadelphia area and with press officers of two denominations.

The report is significant especially for its information on reader interest in religion, both as a personal undertaking and as a news subject, and for what it reveals about what readers would like to see in newspaper coverage of the topic.

The two national Gallup surveys of 1,100 people (with a margin of error plus or minus 3 percentage points) begin to contradict assumptions that the audience for religious news is limited and interested primarily in local parochial issues:

- The vast majority of newspaper readers consider themselves to be religious people.
- Fully half say that religion is 'very important' in their lives. Eighty-one percent altogether say religion is at least 'fairly important.'
- Of those surveyed, 71 percent report being daily readers of newspapers. Of those readers, again 81 percent say religion is at least "fairly important" in their lives.
- More than half of the overall sample feel it is at least fairly important for newspapers to cover religion as well as other kinds of news. About 80 percent of those for whom religion coverage is important are daily readers.
- When given nine "non-news" categories and asked which is "very important" to cover, 23 percent of those surveyed say it is most important to cover religion, which ranks fourth in the list, just ahead of sports (21 percent). Education ranks first at 44 percent, followed by health (41 percent), and business (28 percent). The remaining topics, in order, are food, advice, entertainment, the arts.
- Using the same categories, religion ranks seventh when respondents are asked how satisfied they are with the way each of the topics is covered in newspapers they read regularly. "In terms of satisfaction with coverage," said Dr. Hoover, "the highest percentage report coverage of sports being 'excellent' (36 percent)." Only 12 percent of respondents judge that the religion coverage they see most often is "excellent."

Religion Plays Key Role In Marriage Stability

When religion plays an important role in an individual's life, that person is much less likely than others to have experienced severe marital discord (45% vs. 58%). Even taking into account the fact that the most religious are older people, — whose marriages are more stable in any event — religion has a strong influence on marital stability. For example, 58% of young people who are not very religious have experienced severe marital discord compared to only 45% among religious young people.

Specific religious affiliation, however, has no bearing on marital stability, with Protestants, Catholics, and those identifying with other religions equally likely to report that their marriages have been stable.

Money, Education Not Root Problems

Socio-economic factors don't seem closely related to marital stability. Marital discord occurs just as often among the poor and less well-educated as it does among the more affluent and better educated. Similarly, marriages in which the wife works full- or part-time appear to be no more or less happy than those in which the husband works and the wife tends the home.

These findings are from a major national study of marriage and divorce in America, conducted during the period December 27-29, 1988, and based on telephone interviews with 996 adults who have ever been married, out of a total sample of 1,213 adults, 18 and older.

Teens Strongly Endorse Traditional Personal Qualities

Responsibility, honesty, self-respect, and hard work head the list of qualities that teens consider important for people their age to learn, according to the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

Nearly all teens (93 percent) now believe it is important for their contemporaries to acquire a sense of responsibility. This represents a 4 percentage point increase since 1987, when 89 percent of teens held similar beliefs. Currently, only 7 percent of teens believe it is only fairly important to learn a sense of responsibility.

Honesty is considered a very important trait by 89 percent of teens. An additional 10 percent say it is fairly important to be honest, but 1 percent maintains it is not so important.

Self-respect is important according to 88 percent of teens; 11 percent say it is fairly important, and 1 percent not so important. Young women are slightly more likely than young men to value self-respect very much, by a margin of 91 percent to 86 percent.

Hard work appears to have become a youthful virtue once again, with eight teens in 10 (81 percent) rating it very important as a quality for their generation. An additional 18 percent consider it fairly important, and 1 percent say hard work is not so important.

Teens who come from blue-collar family background (86 percent) are more likely than those from white-collar families to rate hard work as very important for young people. In comparison to the 81 percent who now rate hard work as very important, in 1987, only 70 percent saw much virtue in the quality.

Obedience is considered a very important trait by 68 percent of teens, fairly important by 29 percent, but not so important by 3 percent. Most likely to consider obedience very important are teens from blue-collar families (76 percent), those who attend church regularly (73 percent), and those who live in the South (74 percent).

Independence is highly valued by two teens in three (67 percent), while 27 percent say it is somewhat important, and 3 percent not so important. Young women (75 percent) are far more likely than young men (59 percent) to consider a sense of independence to be a very important trait.

Patience is not a virtue usually associated with teens, but 64 percent of them consider it very important. It is deemed fairly important by 33 percent, and not important by 3 percent.

Half the teens (49 percent) consider religious faith an important quality for people their age to learn. It is considered fairly important by 36 percent, but 15 percent do not consider it an important quality. Protestant teens (58 percent) are more likely than Catholics (42 percent) to say that developing religious faith is important. Sentiment for considering religious faith to be very important is strongest in the South (62 percent) and weakest in the East (36 percent).

Here is how the question was asked:

Of the following personal qualities, how important do you feel each one is for a person your age to learn: very important, fairly important, or not so important?

The findings reported here are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross section of 503 teenagers, 13 through 17, conducted March 1-15, 1989.

Importance of Personal Qualities

(Ratings by All Teens)

	Very important	Fairly important	Not so important
	%	%	%
Responsibility	93	7	*
Honesty	89	10	1
Self-respect	88	11	1
Hard work	81	18	1
Obedience	68	29	3
Independence	67	30	3
Patience	64	33	3
Religious faith	49	36	14**

*Less than 0.5 percent
**One percent "don't know."

PRRC To Offer Presentation Based On Results of Unchurched American Study

Princeton, N.J. — Stating that the results of the recently completed "Unchurched American" survey needed to have widespread availability to clergy and other church workers, George Gallup, Jr., Executive Director of the Princeton Religion Research Center, announced that the PRRC will offer consultation that will help individual churches and other religious organizations make practical use of the survey findings.

The presentation entitled, "Reaching the Unchurched American," includes an overview of the study, comparisons between the 1988 and 1978 surveys, and possible steps to reach the unchurched.

For more information on how you can schedule a presentation for your church, denomination, or religious organization, please write:

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